

Livestock Leaders Get Excited Too Easily Over Federal Edicts

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MERTZON — The shearing season doesn't open officially in the Shortgrass Country until next spring, but nevertheless the leaders of the various ranch organization are already excited over whether the new extension of the Minimum Wage Act will include sheep shearers. Of course it is nothing new for the Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers Assn. to start boiling the tissue away from their nerve tips at the mere scent of some newly created inconvenience in our way of life.

As you may recall, back when the bird watchers first began to dabble with the idea of giving the gold eagles a better chance to digest baby lambs and kid goats without interruption of airplane hunters, the same parties nearly put the mail service to Congress on 24-hour duty, handling all the poison pen letters they wrote on that matter.

The alarmists followed the same pattern when the Labor Department got the whim to close the bracero program. The Secretary of Labor had barely blotted the ink on the memorandum, ordering the end of this last visible source of ranch labor, before these well known prophets of doom were predicting that tomatoes would rot in the fields and, worst of all, ranch help would be harder to find than a free ticket to the World Series.

Once or twice during the bracero fracas, attacks on Congress became so intense that many of the poor legislators were threatened by a special type of neurosis which comes from missing too many coffee or cocktail breaks. To this very day, there still remain a few lawmakers who suffer deep scars from this long-ago invasion of their private debating grounds.

After losing the bracero fight and doing a little offhand grumbling about tomato pickers and cowhands being as scarce as tax refund applications, the battlers rallied against imported meat.

Even though the leaders of this crusade knew full well that at the rate the domestic livestock market was declining, it was soon going to take the Seventh Fleet to force foreign producers to shop their wares in our direction, they continued to blast foreign competition.

Once again Congress was brought under fire. On this occasion, the ranting and raving by mail and wire was to become so severe that, for a short time, it looked as if some Congressmen might have to postpone their annual junkets to the watering spots of Europe as well as their midwinter forays to inspect the beaches of the Caribbean Sea.

Needless to say, if this threat had developed, the damage to the morale of the representatives would have been incalculable, not to overlook what a blow it would have been to Congressional secretaries and other members of the entourage.

Today's tirade about the minimum wage law is closely related to these past events. Here it is the second week of December and these pessimists are up in arms over something that won't hurt a soul until late February or March.

Of course, enemies of the new wage act aren't going to admit it, but even if the bill does include contract workers on ranches, it won't mean that a famine will suddenly break out across the land. Probably all that will happen will be that 75 to 80 percent of the ranchers will go in the hole 35 to 40 percent farther than they did the year before.

So it's a mystery how the TS&GRA and the National Wool Growers can become so excited over a matter that might take place so far in the future. They tend to magnify long-range trifles into immediate threats to the industry.

It seems, however, that leaders of the ranch organizations are going to continue taking exception to every single restriction imposed by Washington. I don't suppose they ever will be happy until the Government quits messing in our affairs.